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LETTER BY HEAD OF CIA CRITICIZED BY FULBRIGHT

Senator Questions Propriety of Praise for Editorial

BY RICHARD DUDMAN

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the Post-Dispatch

WASHINGTON, July 27—Senator J. W. Fulbright questioned the propriety today of a letter written by Richard Helms, director of Central Intelligence Agency, to the St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

The letter, published today, praised an editorial headed "Brickbats for Fulbright," commenting on the defeat of the Arkansas Senator's proposal to expand Senate supervision of the CIA.

Fulbright said it was "rather unusual" for a government employee to make such a comment.

"I'm very surprised that a professional CIA employee would so obviously enter a highly political controversy," Fulbright said.

He asserted that the editorial praised by Helms was "a complete distortion of what was really involved."

"My interpretation of the action of the Senate was that it protected the CIA from any im-

partiality," Fulbright said.

No Comment From CIA

A spokesman for the CIA acknowledged that Helms had signed the letter, dated July 18. He said that the agency would have no comment on the matter.

The Post-Dispatch was told that the letter was written by a subordinate in the CIA and that

Helms signed it with the understanding that it was a friendly personal communication and would not be published.

Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, had proposed that representatives of that committee be added to a special Senate group assigned to supervise the activities of the CIA. The special unit now includes ranking members of the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees.

After a debate in an unusual closed session, the Senate rejected Fulbright's resolution by voting 61 to 28 to send it to the Armed Services Committee.

The newspaper said that the

proposal could have meant the end of the CIA, "if the agency were subjected to claws of the militant doves on Fulbright's committee."

Rebuke Praised

It praised the CIA as "one of our most valuable agencies in foreign affairs" and said that "the Senate properly rebuked Senator Fulbright and gave the CIA a sound vote of confidence."

Helms's letter said:

"I want to let you know of my pleasure in reading the editorial 'Brickbats for Fulbright' in the Globe-Democrat of July

18.

"It reflects so well your paper's policy of 'printing the news impartially, supporting what it believes to be right and opposing what it believes to be wrong without regard to party politics.'"